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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003175

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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION CANDIDATE MANUEL ROSALES' INNER CIRCLE

REF: CARACAS 003069

CARACAS 00003175 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT DOWNES,
REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Summary. While consensus opposition candidate Manuel Rosales continues to work with the "big tent" campaign team he announced on August 18, he relies more heavily on a smaller, less visible "kitchen cabinet" from his home state of Zulia. Former Zulia Governor Omar Barboza, for example, is Rosales' closest political advisor, although he holds no formal campaign title. Rosales also tapped prominent Zulianos to shape his political messages, to develop his economic policies, as well as to represent him before the National Electoral Council (CNE). With the help of such close confidants, Rosales has so far mounted a strong and credible presidential campaign. At the same time, his reliance on Zulianos during the campaign may be exacerbating differences with coalition partners and could complicate his ability, barring an electoral upset, to keep the opposition united after December 3. End Summary.

The Official Campaign Team

12. (C) Consensus opposition candidate and Zulia governor Manuel Rosales announced his official campaign team to the media on August 18. Showing his ability to unify, Rosales selected experienced advisers from across the opposition political spectrum. He tapped former Primero Justicia presidential candidate Julio Borges to be his unofficial running mate and named presidential aspirant Teodoro Petkoff to lead his campaign strategy. Notable campaign members under Rosales' "big tent" also include feuding Primero Justicia leaders Armando Briquet and Gerardo Blyde (Strategy Commission), as well as Timoteo Zambrano (International Relations) and Liliana Hernandez (Sectoral Movements). Rosales also gave nominal campaign jobs to former minor presidential aspirants such as Enrique Tejera Paris, William Ojeda, and Cecilia Sosa, among others.

13. (C) Only a few of the aforementioned campaign leaders is actually playing a lead role, according to campaign insiders. Petkoff heads up a small, tight-knit political strategy cell to which Rosales is reportedly paying attention. Timoteo Zambrano is serving as the campaign's principal liaison to the diplomatic community and Ojeda is coordinating the activities of the numerous parties supporting Rosales. On

the other hand, Rosales campaign insiders generally accuse Julio Borges -- and much of Primero Justicia -- of trying to advance Borges' own political future rather than working wholeheartedly for Rosales. Rosales' people give higher marks to PJ dissidents Gerardo Blyde and Liliana Hernandez.

The Real Campaign Team

¶4. (C) Rosales is reportedly a hands-on manager who does not delegate many campaign decisions. At the same time, he is relying on a small group of close advisors from Rosales' Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) party and home state of Zulia. This Zulian "kitchen cabinet" is playing most of the key roles on the Rosales campaign, according to our opposition contacts. Rosales also dispatched UNT lieutenants from Zulia to head up the campaign in each of Venezuela's 23 states. The Zulian inner circle has helped Rosales launch and sustain a surprisingly strong presidential campaign that has managed to consolidate and build upon anti-Chavez sentiment.

¶5. (C) At the same times, the Rosales core has had to work through divisions between the UNT and its coalition partners at both the national and local levels. Leaders of the electoral NGO Sumate and campaign insiders believe Rosales incurred self-inflicted wounds by putting so many Zulianos into key campaign positions. Rosales' coalition partners currently appear more united in opposition to Chavez than by enthusiasm for the Zulia governor. During Rosales' successful October 7 "Avalanche" rally, for example, participants generally supported Rosales under their own party colors and banners (Reftel). It is easy to imagine that the fissures between Rosales and his political allies from outside UNT would become more pronounced, regardless of the results on December 3. They also demonstrate how challenging it would be for the opposition to stay united in

CARACAS 00003175 002.2 OF 002

the wake of a Chavez victory.

The Inner Circle

¶6. (C) Omar Barboza: Despite his low public profile, Omar Barboza is Rosales' most important political advisor. The silver-haired lawyer was the governor of Zulia from 1985 to ¶1989. At that time, like Rosales, he was a member of Accion Democratica. While his advice carries weight with Rosales, the opposition candidate has not reportedly given him license to speak independently on Rosales' behalf. Barboza has made few public statements and according to one Rosales insider, avoids public attention because he carries "Fourth Republic" baggage. In mid-September, Barboza outlined for Union Radio the Rosales campaign's nuanced approach toward electoral conditions, noting that while conditions are important, the primary work of the campaign was to "create a democratic majority in the streets."

¶7. (C) Ruben Barboza: Omar Barboza's brother Ruben is the Rosales campaign treasurer. According to campaign insiders, he won a number of lucrative government contracts when Rosales was mayor of Maracaibo and continues to do so during Rosales governorship. Ruben Barboza reportedly loans his private jet to Rosales for campaign trips. As President of the Farmer's Federation of the Maracaibo Lake Region (FEDELAGO) and Director of the National Federation of Farmers, Ruben has publicly criticized the government's agricultural policies and exhorted the government to provide greater security for farmers. Like Rosales, he signed the Pedro Carmona decree.

¶8. (C) Angel Emiro Vera: After Omar Barboza, veteran Zulian politician Angel Emiro Vera is probably Rosales' closest

advisor. Vera is the political director of the Un Nuevo Tiempo party and was a UNT deputy in the National Assembly from 2000 to 2005. A former member of the Accion Democratica party, Vera was also elected to the Venezuelan congress for two separate five-year terms from 1989 to 1999. Vera is an economist and accrued considerable experience on the Finance Committee in the National Assembly. He played an active part in rolling out Rosales' debit card scheme ("Mi Negra") for distributing Venezuela's oil revenues. He is on the board of the Caracas-based NGO Permanent Commission for Economic Development.

¶9. (C) Enrique Marquez: As Rosales' liaison to the National Electoral Council (CNE), Enrique Marquez works directly with Rosales and reportedly works alone. Marquez was a deputy in the National Assembly from the left-wing La Causa R party from 2000 to 2005. He joined Un Nuevo Tiempo when Rosales personally recruited him as an advisor. He also worked on Rosales' successful re-election as governor of Zulia in 2004.

While Timoteo Zambrano is the principal liaison to the local diplomatic community, Rosales insiders report that Marquez carries more influence with Rosales and is the principal campaign team authority on Rosales' views on international observers and electoral conditions. He is an engineer by trade.

¶10. (C) Heliodoro Quintero: Quintero heads up Rosales' public policy shop responsible for elaborating social, economic, public security, defense, international, agricultural, and environmental policies for the campaign. As a former Venezuelan representative to OPEC, Quintero's real expertise is oil, and he aspires to be Rosales' Energy Minister. Like Vera, he also played a key role in launching the debit card program. The fast-talking 43-year old Quintero hails from Maracaibo, and he is the nephew of a former head of PDVSA. He works in Caracas as a senior advisor for an independent petroleum consulting firm. Some twenty years ago, he graduated from the University of Zulia with a degree in mechanical engineering.

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